



Dr. Mara Karlin

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy,
Plans, and Capabilities

Dr. Karlin was sworn in as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategies, Plans, and Capabilities on August 17, 2021.

Prior to taking on this role, Dr. Karlin served as the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and she served on the policy team for the Biden-Harris Transition. Karlin was Director of Strategic Studies and an Associate Professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), and a Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution. Previously, she served in national security roles for five U.S. secretaries of defense, advising on policies spanning strategic planning, defense policy and budgeting, future conflicts, and regional security affairs.

She started her government career as a civil servant in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and has received the Secretary of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Award. She is the author of two books on defense policy and military history.